

Only help build our strength to the highest peak

No one can ever put us to defeat  
For America's heart will always continue to beat.

I am privileged to represent the Szewczuk family in the United States Congress.

#### THE RURAL PROBLEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, in 1908, President Roosevelt charged the Country Life Commission with the task of solving the "rural problem." He identified this problem as the fact that the social and economic institutions of this country are not keeping pace with the Nation as a whole.

□ 1245

Uttered almost 100 years ago, those words just as easily describe our situation in America today.

Many people are aware that there is indeed a farm crisis plaguing rural America. However, this crisis does not stop at the farm. Consider the crumbling infrastructure, lack of educational and employment opportunities, out-migration of our youth, inadequate health care facilities, and a growing digital divide. These are just a few of the struggles our rural communities must overcome.

Consider the following sobering statistics: of the 250 poorest counties in America, 244 are rural; 28 percent of the housing stock in rural America is considered physically deficient; rural workers are almost twice as likely to earn the minimum wage than their urban counterparts; 12 percent of rural workers earn the minimum wage, whereas only 7 percent of the urban workers earn the same. Because of this, the face of poverty in rural America is a working family. Two-thirds of the rural poor live in a family where at least one member is working.

These are serious problems that require our attention. In the light of these and other difficulties, it is not surprising that we are witnessing a great hollowing out in rural areas. Consider the recent statistics. The census says that people are leaving in large numbers from rural America. The growing gap between rural and urban America threatens to turn this into an irreversible gulf. We must take steps to close this gap before it is too late.

Tomorrow, I will join with my colleague, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON), to offer an amendment to the farm bill that will seek to provide rural America with additional resources to address these pressing problems. The amendment will increase critical funding to three important areas.

First, it will provide almost \$50 million annually for drinking water and

wastewater facility infrastructure grants for small towns and rural areas. In a recent survey of its members, the National Association of Counties, which has endorsed this amendment, found that water infrastructure needs was the number one concern of its counties nationwide.

Rural and small non-metropolitan areas face particular needs and challenges in meeting their drinking and wastewater infrastructure needs. Water systems located in communities with less than 10,000 residents account for 94 percent of community water systems in this country. Many of them with low tax bases. The Environmental Protection Agency reported in 1997 that small communities, serving less than 3,300 residents, are in need of \$37.2 billion through the year 2014 just to keep up with the current challenges. A sound infrastructure is a prerequisite for both quality of life and for economic development. We must not allow a disproportionate amount of infrastructure dollars to flow simply to urban areas.

Second, this amendment will provide almost \$50 million annually to provide rural areas with strategic regional planning and implementation grants. Unlike our urban areas, rural communities often do not have the capacity to inventory their assets and to plan for their collective future. Just as our urban communities require careful planning, strategies and long-term thinking, so do our rural communities.

This important funding would enable rural communities to join together across county lines to have a marketing area where they could be competitive across jurisdictions so they can work together for the good of rural residents throughout the region. We must not consign our rural communities to a slow disappearance by doing nothing. We must help them increase their own capacity and draw upon their natural assets and to develop their future collectively.

Finally, this amendment provides \$10 million per year for value-added agricultural development grants. If our agricultural producers are to innovate and survive, we must enable them to capture more of the profit in their own communities.

This amendment does not add new policy to the farm bill as passed out of the committee or change current policy in the bill. It simply seeks to build upon the work that the committee has already done by increasing resources available to the areas that the chairman and the ranking member of the committee have determined appropriate.

I am aware that some will say that I am taking away from farmers, but I submit to my colleagues that rural communities include farmers, their families, their neighbors, and communities. So I urge my colleagues to consider this rural amendment to the farm bill.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BALLENGER). Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 51 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT) at 2 p.m.

#### PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Lord God, source of life and constant guide to Your people, yesterday Members of this House stood at ground zero in New York City. Their stunned silence grieved the loss of over 5,000 lives; and hopefully, brief words of encouragement helped so many workers remove the dreadful consequences of evil which tried to crush the ordinary work-a-day world of America.

With Your power to save, strengthen this Congress and Your people across this Nation that we may realistically embrace both the loss and the mighty task of the future.

Throughout the history of New York and this Nation, You have blessed us, Lord, time and time again.

Whereas evil has no imagination and feeds only on itself, Your blessings of goodness spiral into a dynamic of creativity and help us to see signs of hope born of pain and standing in the midst of suffering.

May the vacuous space left by the World Trade Center open the minds and hearts of peoples of the world to deeper compassion and a new level of human understanding.

Already in the smoking crater of death, we witnessed apostles of self-sacrifice and dedicated service: police, firefighters, FEMA workers, public officials, and volunteers.

From the dust and twisted steel of Ground Zero, may the twin towers of liberty and unity lift all of us to a new dedication to perform our daily tasks well as true believers and builders on Your blessings, both now and forever. Amen.

#### THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

#### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.